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S E R M O N

Preached in the Parish-Church of

ST. ANNE, WESTMINSTER,

O N

Thursday, November 29, 1759:

B E I N G

The Day appointed by Proclamation for a GENERAL
THANKSGIVING to Almighty GOD for the Signal
Successes of the present Year.

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Assistant Preacher at *St. Anne's, Westminster*, and Rector
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M.DCC.LIX.

S E R M O N

THE



JOSHUA i. 4, 7.

From the Wilderneys and this Lebanon, even unto the great River, the River Euphrates, all the Land of the Hittites, and unto the great Sea, toward the going down of the Sun, shall be your Coast.

Only be thou strong, and very couragious, that thou mayst observe to do according to all the Law which Moses my Servant commanded thee.

THIS is one of the prophetical Promises and Instructions which the Lord, on the Death of *Moses*, gave to *Joshua*; a Man, who, we are told, *was full of the Spirit of Wisdom*, for *Moses*, by the Command of the Lord, *had laid his Hands upon him* *. The *Israelites*, under the Guidance of God himself, were now encamped on the Banks of *Jordan*, in Sight of that promised

* Deut. xxxiv. 9.

Land, which *Moses*, for his Transgression, was forbid to enter. He therefore, though *his Eye was not dim, nor his natural Force abated* *, being gathered unto his People, in his Stead arose a Leader whose Courage had already, in a most trying Emergency, been proved and rewarded †. To him the great *Shepherd of Israel* entrusts the Care of his Flock, and to the Word of Exhortation annexes the Assurance, that if he *turned not from the Law to the right Hand or the left*, he should *make his Way prosperous, and should have good Success* ‡. *Be ye strong, and of a good Courage* §; be not, on the one hand, intimidated or dismayed by the unexpected Difficulties you have yet to encounter, and, on the other hand, let not the marvellous Conquests that you have already obtained, be the Source of Presumption and Security: But fully to promote and insure Success, that is, to engage the Almighty to crown your Endeavours, and still to approve himself your Guide and Defender, *meditate in this Book of*

* Deut. xxxiv. 7.

† Joshua i. 8.

‡ Numb. xiv.

§ Joshua i. 6.

the Law, Day and Night *: Be not corrupted, as you have formerly been, with the Idolatry and Abominations of the neighbouring Heathen, nor provoke me to Wrath, as both you and your Fathers have often done, by Diffidence and Distrust in my Word and Promise, and Murmurs and Complaints against my Servants. So *may ye prosper whithersoever ye go* †. So shall the Successes which have been hitherto vouchsafed you be an Earnest and Prelude to far greater Blessings ; and so, when these Dangers are happily surmounted, shall every Man dwell safely under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-tree ‡. In other Words, that is, in the Words of the Text, which contains both the Instruction and the Promise, *From the Wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great River, the River Euphrates, all the Land of the Hittites, even unto the great Sea, toward the going down of the Sun, shall be your Coast. Only be thou strong, and very courageous, that thou mayst observe to do*

* Joshua i. 8.

† Joshua i. 7.

‡ 1 Kings iv. 25.

according

according to all the Law which Moses my Servant commanded thee.

From these Words, as already explained, I shall proceed to consider, in such a manner as may be suitable to the present Solemnity, both the natural and acquired Advantages

I. Of the Children of *Israel*; and,

II. Of the People of this Land:

And from a due Consideration and Comparison of both I shall endeavour to show that the Advice in the Text is as proper and seasonable for us as it was for them; and as we have in some measure obtained the Promise, so are we under the strongest Obligations to follow the Instruction.

And, 1. The natural Advantages of the Land of *Canaan*, of which the *Israelites* were now in part possessed, were such as made it the Wonder and *the Glory of all Lands* *, and justly entitled it to that emphatical Description of being *a Land flow-*

* Ezek. xx. 6.

ing with Milk and Honey. Such was the Temperature of the Climate, and the Mildness of the Seasons, and so happily was it diversified by Hills and Valleys, Springs and Rivers, that, in Opposition to the Land of *Egypt*, where the Overflowings of the *Nile* supplied the Place of Showers, this Land was refreshed with seasonable Rain, and, in the Words of *Moses*, *drank Water of the Dew of Heaven* †. The Consequence of this was unbounded Plenty; and neither Corn, nor Wine, nor Oyl, were wanting. Add to this, that it was also *a Land for Cattle* ‡, and had Flocks and Herds in great Abundance, as appears from the Numbers that were found in the Cities that they conquered, and the Care they took for their Preservation. In short, it was, as *Moses* describes it, *a Land of Brooks of Water, of Fountains, and Depths that spring out of Valleys and Hills; a Land of Wheat, and Barley, and Vines, and Fig-trees, and Pomegranates; a Land of Oyl-olive, and Honey; a Land wherein they might eat Bread*

† Deut. xi. 11.

‡ Numb. xxxii. 4.

without

without Scarceness; a Land whose Stones were Iron, and out of whose Hills they might dig Brass *.

To the natural Felicity of such a Situation, if

2. We add their acquired Advantages, they were, beyond all Parallel or Description, great and wonderful. The Lord himself was their Defender; and so glorious and visible were the Miracles that he wrought, that they walked rather *by Sight* than *by Faith*, and nothing but the most wilful and obstinate Blindness could have prevented their seeing and acknowledging his Power and Goodness. From the Land of *Egypt*, that *House of Bondage*, how signal was their Deliverance! The Winds and the Waves, by God's Appointment, fought for *Israel*; and those Waters, which to them were a Wall of Defence, were a Gulph of Destruction to their Enemies. In the Wilderness, how were they supported by Bread from above, and nourished with the Dew of Heaven! To guard them from the Corrup-

* Deut. viii. 7, 8, 9.

tions of their idolatrous Neighbours, God also condescended to be their Lawgiver, and gave them his Commands, with astonishing Solemnity, from *a Mount that burned with Fire**. The Rewards, that were annexed to the Observance of them, were all earthly Advantages and temporal Blessings; their Days were to be lengthened, and their Families increased; their Fields were to be crowned with Plenty, and their Arms with Success. Hence, while they continued steadfast in Obedience, their Herds and their People *multiplied exceedingly*, and the numerous and powerful Hosts of their Enemies were forced to fly before them. In the Space of a few Years the Promise in the Text was literally accomplished. Though the *Canaanites* were a People trained to War, and dwelt in Mountains, to Armies, seemingly, inaccessible, and though their Cities were *high and fenced up to Heaven*, yet nothing could withstand *Joshua's* Sword, and the Lord's Displeasure. Though *all the Kings of the Hills and of the Valleys*, in a formidable Alliance, combined

* Heb. xii. 18.

against them, and though *Gibeon*, their only Ally, was devoted to Destruction, yet their own Cities and Countries were besieged and wasted, and they and their Armies were routed and destroyed by inferior Forces. Even *the Sons of the Anakims, who came of the Giants*, People in whose Sight they seemed but as *Grasshoppers*, were rooted out, and found every Advantage of Art and Nature, of Strength and Situation, ineffectual. By such a Series of Victories it plainly appeared that *the Race was not to the swift, nor the Battle to the strong*; and such was the Prosperity of *Israel*, both natural and acquired, while the Lord was their God!

II. From the brief Consideration of those memorable Times the Transition to our own will be obvious and easy.

And, I. In the natural Advantages that Providence has vouchsafed us we are equal, at least, if not superior, to them. As great is the Temperance of the Climate we enjoy, and to the Extremes of Heat and Cold we are equally Strangers. Our Land too is a

Land of Hills and Valleys, and has therefore all the Variety which the Fancy could invent, or the Eye desire. It is also a *Land of Springs and Rivers*, and abounds with Increase of Corn and Cattle. This Year in particular (which alone might be a Source of Praise and Thanksgiving), has been uncommonly favourable and plenteous to us, since, by the Providence of God, his two Visitations of the Dearth and the Murrain are happily ceased. Add to this that natural and almost impregnable Barrier which the Waves afford us; those Waves, which, like the Sea to the *Israelites*, are a Wall to us. And by these we are not only secured (as we trust) from hostile Attacks, but improved and enriched by friendly Intercourse; since to them it is owing that, like *Tyre*, we *sit in the Seas* *, as a Queen among the Isles, and are connected by our Commerce with the most distant Regions. *Happy are the People that are in such a Case*, and manifest are the Blessings of such a Situation! But when to these we add,

* Ezek. xxviii. 2.

2. Our other, our acquired Advantages, what an ample and glorious Theme do they afford us! It will be needless to go back to our Redemption from Popery, or the many other signal Deliverances of our Church and State, since the present Year alone will yield abundant Matter for Contemplation. Every Quarter of the World hath seen our Triumphs, and our Fleets and Armies have been successfully emulous in their Country's Cause. And though, for the wisest Reasons, the Light of *Israel* is now withdrawn, tho' the Lord goes not visibly before our Hosts *by Day in a Pillar of a Cloud, and by Night in a Pillar of Fire*; yet every one must own, that *this also is the Lord's Doing, and marvellous in our Eyes*. In the Beginning of this Year, like that of the last, a formidable Confederacy, like that of the *Amorites*, went up against *Gibeon*, our only Ally, and, if their Skill and Resolution had been equal to their Strength, must soon have crushed it. *Out of the North came up a Nation which made the Land desolate* *. *Before them it was as*

* Jer. l. 3.

the Garden of Eden, behind them a desolate Wilderneys *. And though Victory attended them, yet what was the Consequence? Their Defeat could scarce have been more advantageous, and happily has our Ally repaired his Losses “by the inexhaustible Resources of his own Mind.” In another Part of the Continent behold a small Part of an inferior Army repulsing and vanquishing the numerous and chosen Troops of the Enemy! A Victory this, at which they themselves have expressed their Wonder, and which our own Posterity will scarce believe. Nor could any Event be ever more seasonable or more providential. Since, had we failed of Success, our Allies and our Fellow-subjects were to have been oppressed and plundered, and, by the Directions of an able Statesman, their whole Country would have been made “a downright Desert †.” While such were our Efforts abroad, in vain has the

* Joel ii. 3. † *Un veritable Desert*. See Marshal Duke de Belleisle's Letter to Marshal de Contades, dated Versailles, July 23, 1759, and published in the *London Gazette*, August 18, 1759.

Enemy,

Enemy, by Threats of Invasion, attempted to disturb our domestic Quiet. One of their Fleets has been dispersed or destroyed, and the other, through the Blessing of the Almighty on the Justice of our Cause, by this Time, we hope, has shared the same Fate. Mean time not one of our Operations has been by this means suspended, not a single Soldier has been sent for home, and this desperate Undertaking has had beneficial Consequences : Since the Spirit of our Ancestors has been revived amongst us, and that Discipline, which the Laws of our Country have wisely established, has been practised both by Nobles and Peasants with uncommon Ardor. If we extend our Views to the most distant Regions, we shall find in one Quarter of the Globe not an Enemy left, and in another those that remained have been repulsed and defeated both by Land and Sea. But in the third, the Source of Contention, and the Source of Riches, how have their visionary Schemes been baffled, and their Plan of Dominion disconcerted ! In the South, an Island, pleasant as *Lebanon*, has been

been wrested from them; and in the North, the Promise which the Lord, in the Text, made to *Joshua*, has been almost literally verified and accomplished. *From the Wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great River,—all the Land of the Hittites, even unto the great Sea, toward the going down of the Sun,* is now our *Coast*. Vain were all the Obstacles of Art and Nature, since the Lord most apparently fought for us, as he did for *Israel*, though not by a Series of Miracles, yet by the Guidance and Direction of Second Causes. A People who, like the *Canaanites*, dwelt in *Hills and Cities, high and fenced*, have been rooted out, and neither Force nor Fraud, neither regular Discipline, nor savage Barbarity, could protect or save them. Add to this the inconsiderable Loss which these Conquests have cost us; inconsiderable indeed, if ONE be excepted, in whom it may truly be said that we lost an Army. Yet let us not despair, nay from Experience let us rather be confident, that other *Joshuas* are still remaining; nor can it be otherwise when Men of Rank and Fortune

tune are gloriously distinguished by the painful Pre-eminence of superior Hazards.

From this Summary of past Events, and the Similitude of our Advantages, both natural and acquired, to those of *Israel*, what remains to be drawn but this Conclusion? That, as we have in some measure obtained the Promise, so must we perform the Conditions of it? As the Lord has scattered our Enemies and enlarged our Borders, so must we enlarge our Faith and Obedience, and scatter our Vices and Impieties. In short, we must follow the Advice that was given to *Joshua*; we must

I. *Be strong, and very courageous; and*

II. *Observe to do according to all the Law which our Lord and Saviour hath commanded us.*

And, I. Our Strength and Courage will best be shown by supporting and maintaining that Zeal and Resolution, that Union and Harmony, to which, under God, our Success is owing. Let us not despise the Weakness of our Adversaries, nor insult their Distress.

Distress. Presumption and Security are destructive Foes. Events are in the Hands of God alone, and he only knows what Dangers may yet be impending over us, and what a Reverse of Fortune we may still experience. *In this Day of Prosperity* let us consider, and never can Consideration be more necessary, never can we have more Reason to *rejoice with Trembling* *, than when a powerful Armament is, we are assured, come forth against us; and should it have eluded our Care and Vigilance (as, who can answer for Contingencies, and who, but the Lord, can *rebuke the Winds?*) may even now be diffusing Ruin and Desolation among our Fellow-Subjects. Animated, however, by all that is dear and valuable, and assisted and supported by God's Protection, what Motives can be wanting to quicken our Zeal and encourage our Perseverance? Peace, how desirable soever, unless it is lasting, will scarce be welcome; and such a one, we know by Experience, can never be attained, till our Enemies are, by Necessity, obliged to

* Psal. ii. 11.

keep it. And let us recollect, on this Occasion, a remarkable Circumstance in the History of the Kings of *Israel*. They, it seems, being *merciful Kings*, the *Syrians* having sustained many great Defeats, particularly under the Walls of *Aphak*, their King, with most abject Submission, sued for Peace, and obtained the Terms he wanted ; Terms, which, however advantageous, were never complied with, a new War being declared in three Years, on account of a Town which should have been restored, and at whose Attack *Abab* himself was slain in Battle, according to that Word of the Lord, spoken by a Prophet, *Because thou hast let go out of thy Hand a Man whom I appointed to utter Destruction, therefore thy Life shall go for his Life, and thy People for his People* *.

Of the other Extreme we ought at the same Time to be equally careful ; but this we cannot be afraid of, since, if a Peace should be offered, in any Degree consistent with our present Advantages, or future Se-

* 1 Kings xx. 42.

curity,

curity, we have the strongest Assurances that the Wisdom of our Governors will not reject it*. Sensible that we are under a more benevolent and merciful Dispensation than the *Israelites* were, ill would it become the Disciples and Followers of *the Prince of Peace* to found, without Necessity, the Trump of War. Let us, therefore, not only *pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*, but, as our Lord directs us, even *for our Enemies*; and well deserving our Attention, and very suitable to the Character of a Christian Prince, are these Words from the Throne: “ As his Majesty
 “ entered into this War not from Views of
 “ Ambition, so he does not wish to continue
 “ it from Motives of Resentment. The
 “ Desire of his Majesty’s Heart is to see a
 “ Stop put to the Effusion of Christian
 “ Blood †.”

* For a Proof of this, the Reader is referred to the Declaration just delivered at the *Hague*, by Duke *Lewis of Brunswick*, to the Ministers of the Powers at War, in the Name of their *Britannic* and *Prussian* Majesties, and published in the *London Gazette*, December 4, 1759.

† Speech of the Lords Commissioners, November 13, 1759.

2. We must *observe to do according to all the Law which* our Lord and Saviour hath *commanded* us. Ever mindful of our Gospel-Covenant, we must vye with one another in Faith and Obedience, and excell in all the amiable Graces of the Christian Life. And, in particular, Charity and Beneficence can never be more seasonable and praiseworthy. The Diseased and the Aged, the Fatherless and the Widow, should now be the Objects of our Care and Compassion ; those whose Friends or Relations perhaps may have perished in foreign Climes, or whose Distresses may have been owing to the Calamities of War, the Severity of Seasons, or the late uncommon Dearth and Scarcity. Let me add, that those who are blessed with Life's Superfluities, if they are humane as Men, and generous as *Britons*, will chearfully contribute, if Occasion offers, to the Wants and Necessities of those who are now contending, in their Country's Cause, with the Rigours of a Climate more to be dreaded than the Enemy.

Above

Above all, let us *serve the Lord with Fear*, and “ show forth his Praise not only “ with our Lips but in our Lives.” Let not the Vows which we have this Day made, by our Wilfulness or Neglect, increase our Condemnation : But let that froward Generation, of whom we have been speaking, be ever in our View ; and, after all their undeserved Prosperity ; attend to the miserable Consequences of that once *peculiar People’s* Disobedience ! God would not always be provoked with Impunity ; and though he delivered them so miraculously from the Kings of *Canaan*, yet he suffered them at last to be led away Captive into *Babylon*.

Let us farther reflect, that the Sanctions that were annexed to the *Jewish* Dispensation are as inferior to those of our Christian Faith as *things temporal* are to *things eternal*, or Life to Immortality. Our Hopes and Fears, our Rewards and Punishments, are not to terminate with this present State. Our *Tabernacle*, *not made with Hands*, is *greater and more perfect* * than theirs ; our *High Priest*, *the Mediator of a better Cove-*

* Heb. ix. 11.

nant,

nant * *is entered into Heaven itself* †; and from thence, at the general Resurrection, shall return with Glory to reward the Good; and punish the Evil-Doer.

To conclude. With Gratitude and Adoration let us exalt and magnify that mighty Hand and stretched out Arm, which, in the Day of Distress, hath strengthened and preserved us. Let us ascribe the Honour where alone it is due, and say, *Not unto us, O Lord, not to the Arm of Flesh, but unto thy Name give the Glory* ‡! To these Praises let us add our unfeigned Supplications for our gracious Sovereign; that as God has now *given him his Heart's Desire, and has not denied him the Request of his Lips*, so he still may *joy in his Strength, and rejoice in his Salvation* §! That a Life so precious in our Sight may be long preserved, and the Blessings of his Reign transmitted and secured to the latest Times! That his Successor may inherit his princely Virtues, and answer the Wishes and Expectations of a faithful People! Let us extend our Acknow-

* Heb. viii. 6.

‡ Psal. cxv. 1.

† Heb. ix. 24.

§ Psal. xxi. 1, 2.

legements,

legements, with due Subordination, to the other happy Instruments (under God) of our present Rejoicing ; to our Ministers, and Commanders both by Land and Sea, whose Ability and Integrity, whose Conduct and Resolution, but, above all, whose uncommon Harmony and Unanimity, by God's Blessing on their Labours, have been crowned with Success. In a Word, If War must still continue, go forth, as thou hast hitherto done, with our Fleets and Armies ; but rather hasten, O Lord, and prosper, we beseech thee, the Work of Peace ! And may it be such as may answer the Endeavours of our King, " the Vigilance of our Ministry, " the Payments of a willing and obedient " People, and all the glorious Toils and " Hazards of the Soldiery * ! " And these Prayers and Praises we humbly offer in and through the Mediation of thy Blessed Son, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed, &c.

* See Bishop *Fleetwood's* Preface to his Four Sermons, *ad finem*.

F I N I S.

